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Shifts in the Brussels-Capital Region electorate between the June 2009 regional elections and the 13 June 2010 federal elections

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In the Brussels political area, the 13 June 2010 federal elections did not bring about shifts in the electorate which were as spectacular as those seen in Flanders or Wallonia if we refer to the 2007 elections. Significant changes may nevertheless be seen, in particular the progress made by the Socialist Party and the Reform Movement's loss of ground during the elections. It is nevertheless interesting, in the timing of political and electoral life, to turn to the last elections – the 2009 Brussels regional elections – in order to analyse the shifts which occurred in the Brussels spectrum in the 'short' period of political life, punctuated by events and changes which affect – sometimes quickly – the perceptions and the representations of parties and political life. The shifts which took place between the 2009 regional elections and the 2010 federal elections are analysed in this article. The work is based on an exit poll organised by the Centre d'étude de la vie politique (CEVIPOL) at Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), with 3,000 inhabitants of Brussels.

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Introduction

In the Brussels political area, the 13 June 2010 federal elections did not bring about shifts in the electorate which were as spectacular as those seen in Flanders or Wallonia if we refer to the 2007 elections. In Flanders, the spectacular results obtained by the N-VA fired imaginations. The party led by Bart De Wever obtained 10 percentage points¹ more than the best score achieved by the Volksunie during the 1971 national elections. In Wallonia, the momentous headway made by the Parti socialiste, which achieved its best score since 1991,² and the harsh defeat of the Mouvement réformateur, which obtained its worst result since 1987,³ are the most outstanding shifts.

Whilst the extent of the shifts is not as remarkable in the Brussels Region, significant changes may nevertheless be underlined. Let us mention in particular the progress made by the Parti socialiste. The PS came close to the historic score it achieved during the June 2004 regional elections, when it beat the Liberal list by a head. On the contrary, let us point out the Mouvement réformateur's loss of ground during the elections, falling well below the 30% mark. The Mouvement réformateur list barely maintained its status as main party faced with the list drawn by Laurette Onkelinx. In the Flemish spectrum in Brussels, the most important piece of information is the very significant loss of ground recorded by the Vlaams Belang. The Flemish far right lost 47.6% of its votes from one federal election to the next.

It is nevertheless interesting, in the timing of political and electoral life, to turn to the last elections – the 2009 Brussels regional elections – to analyse the shifts which occurred in the Brussels spectrum in the 'short' period of political life, punctuated by events and changes which affect – sometimes quite rapidly – the perceptions

¹ It is essential to speak of percentage points. Contrary to a widespread misunderstanding, a party which goes from 10 to 15% does not gain five percent, but rather five percentage points. As a percentage, it gains 50% (an increase of 5 with respect to the reference point 10).

² Pascal Delwit, 'La voie étroite d'une refondation du parti socialiste (PS)', in Pascal Delwit, Jean-Michel De Waele (eds), *Les partis politiques en Belgique*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1997 (2nd edition).

³ Pascal Delwit, *La vie politique en Belgique de 1830 à nos jours*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2010 (2nd edition).

and the representations of parties and political life. In this respect, several important elements may be underlined:

a) With respect to the June 2009 regional elections, the Parti socialiste made headway and gathered an additional 3.05 points, i.e. 13.1% more than its 2009 score. This observation is important, as the Socialist score from 2009 was considered to be a good result. This gain is therefore based on a high reference point.

b) Contrary to what was observed in the Walloon political area,⁴ the Mouvement réformateur did not experience a drop in votes with respect to the 2009 regional elections. Instead, the Mouvement réformateur list obtained an additional 0.64 points. Indeed, the 2009 results proved to be mediocre for the Mouvement réformateur in Brussels, but the same observation prevails for Wallonia, where the MR nevertheless lost ground with respect to the results achieved in 2009.

c) In 2009, Ecolo had hoped to obtain 20% of votes in the Brussels Region and to become the second party on the political scene in the capital. Although it did not reach these two objectives, Ecolo obtained excellent results, which, in addition to a cabinet post, led to a Deputy Minister in the new executive given to Christos Doukouridis. One year later, the party – led by Olivier Deleuze – experienced a severe loss of ground: - 5.9 points, i.e. 32.9% less than its 2009 score. Moreover, in a symbolic manner, Ecolo had to abandon its status as third party on the political scene to the benefit of the Centre démocrate humaniste.

d) After the June 1999 regional elections, the Christian Social Party found itself on the verge of political marginality in the Brussels area.⁵ At the 2004 Brussels regional elections, the new Centre démocrate humaniste was able to make a comeback and drag itself out of murky waters. Nevertheless, since then the cdH has reached a ceiling. After recording a drop in votes in 2009, the cdH once again experienced a loss of ground in the Brussels area. Combined with the drop in votes observed in the district of Nivelles, this led to the loss of one of the three Brabant seats held by the cdH, within the framework of electoral alliance.⁶ The cdH no longer has a member of parliament in Walloon Brabant. The regaining of its status as third political party in the Region is no consolation.

e) It is interesting to observe that the percentage of votes for Flemish parties has increased somewhat. In 2009, the Flemish parties obtained 11.2%. During the 13 June 2010 federal elections, they obtained 12.1% of valid votes cast.

f) Finally, similar to the situation in Flanders, the political landscape of the Flemish parties in the Brussels Region was also affected by the noteworthy progress made by the N-VA. In Brussels, the nationalist party unexpectedly rose from 2,600 votes obtained in 2009, to 9,000 in 2010, i.e. 16% of the Flemish vote.

⁴ Pascal Delwit, Marjorie Gassner, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Emilie van Haute, 'Les transferts de voix en Wallonie lors des élections fédérales du 13 juin 2010', Note n° 1, Centre d'étude de la vie politique de l'ULB.

⁵ Pascal Delwit, 'Le parti social chrétien : jalons d'un futur incertain', in Pascal Delwit (ed.), *Le parti social chrétien. Mutations et perspectives*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2002, pp. 9-30.

⁶ Regarding electoral rules, refer to Jean-Benoit Pilet, *Changer pour gagner ? Les réformes des lois électorales en Belgique*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2007.

Elections	Fédérale 2007	Régionales 2009	Fédérale 2010
Vlaams Belang	3,15	1,97	1,65
Lijst Dedecker	0,39	0,42	0,30
Open Vld	2,86	2,60	2,35
PS	21,30	23,29	26,34
MR	31,88	26,46	27,10
FN	2,83	1,69	0,98
cdH	14,29	13,14	12,12
CD&V-N-VA	2,11		
CD&V		1,67	1,63
SP.a	1,22	2,19	2,05
N-VA		0,56	1,93
Ecolo	13,98	17,94	12,04
Groen!	1,22	1,26	1,60
R.W.F.	0,40	0,29	0,26
PTB+PVDA+	0,55	0,87	1,55
Front Des Gauches	0,37	0,44	0,81
Parti Populaire			3,47
Wallonie D'Abord			0,39
PROBRUXSEL		1,75	1,33
Belg.Unie	0,31	0,10	0,70
Egalité			1,08
Pirate Party			0,33
Other	3,14	3,35	

Comparative evolution of the results of parties in the Brussels political area

In an analysis of the situation in Wallonia,⁷ we presented an initial evaluation of the shifts in the electorate between the June 2009 regional elections and the 13 June 2010 federal elections. In the present article, we shall carry out the same analysis for Brussels. What are the shifts in the electorate which may be observed between 2009 and 2010, and what is their extent?

A quick representation often simplifies the shifts in the electorate between parties from one election to the next. The reality is very often much more complex than what one may assume based on a brief overview.⁸ In the same way, volatility is often perceived as erratic or is even presented as electoral zapping. The truth is often far from these clichés. It is often possible to determine a coherence in the electoral withdrawals and arrivals.⁹ At this stage, our task does not concern the behaviour of first-time voters.

Our study and analysis are based on work which is unique in Belgium, to be carried out regularly from now on: an exit poll organised by the *Centre d'étude de la vie politique* (CEVIPOL) at *Université libre de Bruxelles* (ULB). In studies aimed at understanding electoral behaviour, the exit poll has two major advantages. Firstly, the citizens have cast their votes and are not influenced by the results of the elections and the related commentaries. We may therefore expect more sincere responses which are less marked by the effects of *social desirability*. Furthermore, more citizens are open to answering questions about electoral and political problems on the day of the elections. In so doing, we reduce the biases related to the difficulty to reach people who are less interested in politics

⁷ Pascal Delwit, Marjorie Gassner, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Emilie van Haute, 'Les transferts de voix en Wallonie lors des élections fédérales du 13 juin 2010', Note n° 1, Centre d'étude de la vie politique de l'ULB.

⁸ Jean-Benoit Pilet, 'Les transferts de voix entre partis entre les élections régionales de 2004 et le scrutin fédéral du 10 juin 2007', in Pascal Delwit, Emilie van Haute, *Le vote des Belges (Bruxelles-Wallonie, 10 juin 2007)*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2007, pp. 111-128.

⁹ Stefano Bartolini, Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

as well as people from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. The main drawback of the exit poll is that a long questionnaire cannot be used. Citizens are only willing to devote a limited amount of time to participating in a study. The selection of themes to be dealt with and questions to be asked is therefore complex. In the study carried out on 13 June 2010, 3,000 inhabitants of Brussels were interviewed in eighteen municipalities in the Region. The municipality of Etterbeek refused to grant the required authorisation. The number of pollsters and the offices in which the interviews were conducted were decided based on sociodemographic realities of the Region and the municipalities. In order to deal with the issue of shifts in the electorate from one election to the next, three questions were asked:

- a) Which party did you vote for today for the House?
- b) Which party did you vote for today for the Senate?
- c) Which party did you vote for during the Brussels regional elections in June 2009?

The parties were presented with their acronym and the name of the head of list. The questionnaire was given in French or in Dutch according to the preferred language of the respondent.

Given the modest scores obtained by Flemish parties in the Brussels area, the results for these parties should be extrapolated with more caution than those of their French-speaking counterparts.¹⁰ We shall first present the retention rate for each party below, i.e. the number of loyal voters from one election to the next. We shall then analyse the behaviour of voters who did not cast the same vote as in 2009. Finally, we shall examine the arrivals and their essence by drawing the balance with the main political parties.

The comparison is based on the results obtained by the political parties during the June 2009 regional elections as well as during the 13 June 2010 federal elections, by isolating the Brussels part of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency (aggregated results of the districts of Anderlecht, Brussels, Ixelles, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Saint-Gilles, Saint-Josse, Schaerbeek and Uccle.) A blind spot exists in the proposed extrapolation: the behaviour of Belgians living abroad who voted in a Brussels municipality during the federal elections. These voters were not able to vote in June 2009 and, of course, could not be interviewed in the exit poll concerning their vote in 2010.

¹⁰ For the French-speaking parties, the confidence interval is 95% (+/- 1.92) and for the Flemish parties, 95% (+/- 4.90).

1. The French-speaking parties

1.1. The Mouvement réformateur

In 2009, the Mouvement réformateur had recovered the status of main party of the Brussels-Capital Region to the detriment of the Parti socialiste. But this performance was not able to hide the electoral and political difficulties of the MR in Brussels. The 2009 score was lower than that of 2004, which was already considered to be very poor. And the Mouvement réformateur list was not capable of reproducing the results of the 2007 federal elections. For the second time in a



cdH	Ecolo	MR	PS	Open-Vld	PP	Pro Brussel	Other
4,81	2,64	76,44	4,65	0,99	7,37	0,90	2,21
5.858	3.214	93.179	5.668	1.207	8.983	1.095	2.701

Presentation of MR votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

row, the MR had to hand the reins of the Region over to a PS-cdH-Ecolo coalition on the French-speaking side, and to an Open-VLD-CD&V-Groen! coalition on the Dutch-speaking side. One year later, the MR was very slightly ahead of its 2009 results, which constitutes a better outcome than in Wallonia.

The Mouvement réformateur had a relatively high retention rate of its 2009 electorate, i.e. 76.4%. More than three quarters of Mouvement réformateur voters from 2009 remained loyal to the party. Which parties received the votes of the citizens who withdrew their support for the MR? The main party which benefited from the disloyal Liberal voters is the People's Party. More than 7% of the Mouvement réformateur voters from 2009 (- 8,983 votes) opted for the 'droite décomplexée' (assumed right) brought to Brussels by one of its co-presidents, Mischaël Modrikamen.

cdH	Ecolo	PS	Open-Vld	Pro Brussel	Other
8.532	13.072	5.332	989	1.412	2.626



MR

Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the MR in 2009.

Just under 5% of Mouvement réformateur voters chose the cdH this time (- 5,858 votes) or the Parti socialiste (- 5668 votes). In contrast, the withdrawal of support to the benefit of Ecolo was more moderate (- 3,214 votes). Shifts in the Liberal family also exist, but in a very

limited proportion: 1% of the MR electorate chose to vote for Open VLD (- 1,207 votes).

On the other hand, the MR benefited from arrivals. In absolute numbers, they came mostly from Ecolo (+ 13,072 votes), then from the cdH (+ 8,532 votes) and finally, to a lesser extent, from the PS (+ 5,332 votes). Although the MR lost 1,200 voters from 2009 to the Open VLD, it benefited from the arrival of 1,400 voters who had opted for the Flemish Liberals in 2009 and who chose the MR this time. The analysis of the balances is favourable to the Mouvement réformateur. It is of course slightly negative with respect to the Parti socialiste (- 336 votes) and above all with respect to the People's Party, but the MR is a clear beneficiary with respect to Ecolo (+ 9,858 votes) as well as the cdH (+ 2,674 votes).

1.2. The Parti socialiste

In the French-speaking political spectrum, the Parti socialiste was the indisputable winner of the elections, both in Wallonia and in the Brussels-Capital Region. It is therefore expected that the PS had a high retention rate of its 2009 electorate.

These expectations are confirmed: more than 83% of Socialist voters in the 2009 Brussels regional elections voted once again for the PS, i.e. a base of 89,473 voters. A certain number of voters nevertheless opted for another party. Which parties were chosen by these former Socialist voters? Two parties benefited from most of the votes: the Centre démocrate humaniste (- 5,495 voters) and the Mouvement réformateur (- 5,332 voters). The electorate which did not vote for the PS this time therefore belongs mainly to the centrist component of the Socialist electorate. However, a segment located more on the left also abandoned the Parti socialiste. Less significantly, the citizens who belong to this component voted for the Workers' Party

of Belgium (- 1912 voters) and Ecolo (- 1,655 voters). In the Socialist family, the shifts to the Flemish sister party were very moderate. Just over 200 voters are estimated to have moved from the PS to the SP.a.

In addition to this base, the Parti socialiste benefited from the arrival of voters from other parties to help establish its electoral victory.

In absolute numbers, most of the voters came from the Ecolo party. 13,562 Ecolo voters from 2009 chose the PS this time. The cdH was also a strong source of votes for the Socialist list. More than 9,000 cdH voters from 2009 chose the list led by Laurette Onkelinx this time. On the other hand, Liberal party arrivals were more modest, but not insignificant. 5,668 voters who had chosen



cdH	Ecolo	MR	PS	SP.a	PP	PTB	Other
5,12	1,55	4,97	83,38	0,19	0,49	1,78	2,51
5.495	1.665	5.332	89.473	208	531	1.912	2.687

Presentation of PS votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

cdH	Ecolo	MR	Sp.a	Groen!	Other
9.075	13.562	5.668	229	397	3.986



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the PS in 2009.

the MR in 2009 voted for the Parti socialiste this time. Whilst the number of withdrawals to the benefit of the SP.a was very small, the same is true for the arrivals: just over 200 former SP.a voters chose the PS during these elections.

The results of the Parti socialiste show a very significant gain to the detriment of Ecolo (+ 11,897 votes). The electoral victory of the Parti socialiste was hinged mainly on the shifts in the electorate between these two parties. There was also a clear gain with respect to the cdH, but to a lesser extent (+ 3,580 votes). As regards the Mouvement réformateur, the withdrawals and arrivals almost balance each other out; the Parti socialiste has a slightly positive balance (+ 336 votes). When all is said and done, the French-speaking Socialists had a negative balance only with regard to the PTB+.

1.3. The Centre démocrate humaniste

As we have mentioned, beginning in 2000, the Centre démocrate humaniste was able to regain a certain level of political and electoral credibility in the Brussels-Capital Region following a decade marked by a slump and disastrous elections in 1999. Admittedly, there are only two cdH mayors in the Brussels area, but the party was once again able to go beyond the 10% mark and move closer to the 15% mark. The 2009 elections had revealed the fragile nature of this recovery. Those of 2010 confirmed this fact, even though the cdH moved Ecolo out of third place.

For the cdH, the retention rate of its 2009 electorate is alarming. The cdH only kept 57.50% of their voters from 2009,

which is very low for elections held only one year later. Most of the former cdH voters withdrew their support to the benefit of the PS: 15% of cdH voters from 2009 chose the Parti socialiste this time (- 9,075 votes). But 14.10% of cdH voters also opted for the MR (-



cdH	Ecolo	MR	PS	CD&V	PP	Other
57,50	6,58	14,10	14,99	0,68	1,43	4,72
34.800	3.982	8.532	9.075	409	868	2.861

Presentation of cdH votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

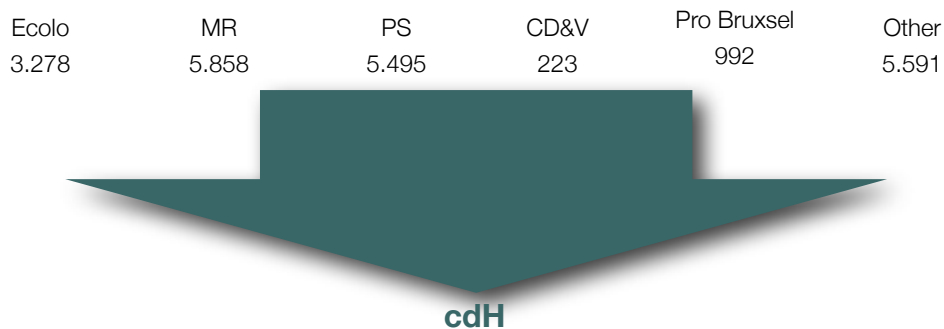
8,532 votes). A not insignificant segment – 6.58% – voted for Ecolo (- 3,982 votes). These withdrawals of large segments of the cdH electorate to the benefit of the three other political parties give rise to questions regarding the central ideological coherence of the cdH and/or its electorate. The extent of the withdrawals to the benefit of parties whose socioeconomic stances are more left-wing or right-wing, and whose views differ regarding social issues, is noteworthy.

On the contrary, let us mention that the shifts towards the People's Party are rather limited. Few cdH voters from 2009 were won over by the party led by Mischael Modrikamen (- 868 voters). Comparable to what was seen with the Socialist family, the number of conversions in favour of the sister party – the CD&V – is insignificant (- 409 votes).

Although it lost many votes in its electorate, the cdH also benefited from arrivals of voters who had not voted for the party during the 2009 regional elections. In absolute numbers, the cdH obtained the votes of a relatively identical number of former Liberal (+ 5,860 votes) and Socialist (+ 5,495 votes) voters. As regards Ecolo, the numbers are more moderate, but are not insignificant (+ 3,278 votes). The results show that very few CD&V voters from 2009 chose to vote for the cdH in 2010 (+ 223 votes).

In the end, the results of the cdH are negative with respect to the three other major French-speaking democratic parties. The balance is the most negative with respect to the Parti socialiste (- 3,580 votes), followed by the MR (- 2,674 votes) and finally with respect to Ecolo (- 704 votes). Admittedly, in the three comparisons, these results are moderately negative in absolute numbers, but this observation must be considered with caution. The comparison is made with the 2009 regional elections, when a drop in cdH votes had already occurred. Furthermore, considering its status

as a secondary political stakeholder in Brussels, when all is said and done, negative balances can only be relatively limited.

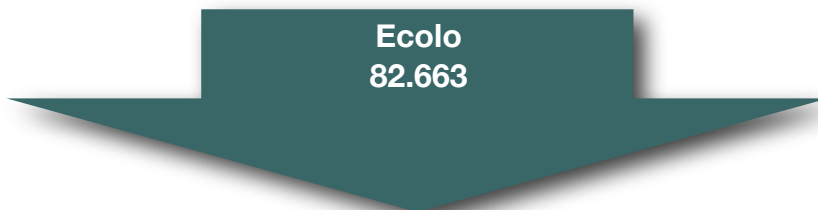


Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the cdH in 2009.

1.4. Ecolo

The results of the June 2010 federal elections were a disillusion for the French-speaking ecologists, with respect to the June 2009 regional elections as well as the previous June 2007 federal elections. In one year, the loss of ground was very significant, and the 2007 score was not even reached. One of the explanations for the loss of ground seen with respect to 2009 is the very low retention rate of the ecologist electorate from 2009. Following what we were able to observe in the Walloon spectrum,¹¹ Ecolo was only able to keep just over half of its voters from 2009. This confirms the observations which we made regarding the Walloon configuration: the ecologists have a rather fluid electorate. The loss of ecologist voters was mainly to the benefit of the Parti socialiste and the Mouvement réformateur. The PS gathered 13,562 voters who had voted for Ecolo in 2009, i.e. one-seventh of the Ecolo electorate. The MR obtained the support of an almost identical number of Ecolo voters from 2009 (- 13,032 votes). On the other hand, the losses to the advantage of the cdH were more moderate (- 3,278 votes). But the withdrawals do not only concern the three major French-speaking democratic parties. Significant losses

were also observed to the benefit of four other political parties with differing views: the sister party, Groen!, which benefited from the arrival of 1,490 Ecolo voters from 2009; two far left parties, namely the PTB+ (- 1,449 votes) and the Front des gauches (- 929 votes); and finally the People's Party (- 1,363 votes). The



cdH	Ecolo	MR	PS	Groen!	PP	PTB	Frt des G	Other
3,97	52,04	15,77	16,41	1,80	1,64	1,75	1,12	5,52
3.278	43.015	13.032	13.562	1.490	1.363	1.449	929	4.555

Presentation of Ecolo votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

latter electoral segment probably concerns a fragment of Ecolo's protesting electorate, in reference to the voters who 'wish to express their discontent with the functioning of the political system'.¹² In any case, the extent and the diversity of the losses of Ecolo voters from 2009 illustrates the party's complex 'ideological equation'. Ecolo attracts electoral segments with very mixed ideological views at socio-economic and social level. Incorporating them on a lasting basis to the benefit of Ecolo will prove to be a particularly difficult challenge for the French-speaking ecologists, in the Walloon spectrum as well as in the Brussels area.

¹¹ Pascal Delwit, Marjorie Gassner, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Emilie van Haute, 'Les transferts de voix en Wallonie lors des élections fédérales du 13 juin 2010', Note n° 1, Centre d'étude de la vie politique de l'ULB.

¹² Marc Hooghe, Sofie Marien, Teun Pauwels, 'Méfiance politique et comportement électoral en Belgique', in Kris Deschouwer, Pascal Delwit, Marc Hooghe, Stefaan Walgrave (eds), *Les voix du peuple. Le comportement électoral au scrutin régional de juin 2009*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2010.

cdH	MR	PS	PTB	Groen!	Pro Brussel	Other
3.982	3.214	1.665	523	452	975	2.200



Ecolo

Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than Ecolo in 2009.

Despite the heavy losses in its 2009 electorate, Ecolo also welcomed new arrivals. The most significant shifts in this respect concerned the cdH and the Mouvement réformateur. Ecolo benefited from the arrival of 3,982 cdH voters and 3,214 Liberal voters from 2009. The shift

originating from the Socialist electorate is much more limited (+ 1,665 votes). In the ecologist family, 452 Groen! voters made the opposite choice and voted for the French-speaking ecologists this time.

It is not surprising that the balance is very unfavourable to Ecolo with respect to all of the parties except the cdH, of which it is a beneficiary (+ 704 votes). But with respect to the Parti socialiste (- 11,897 votes) as well as the Mouvement réformateur (- 9,818 votes), the net loss is substantial.

1.5. The People's Party

The People's Party is a newcomer on the political scene. Baptised in November 2009 by two familiar figures in the media – lawyer Mischaël Modrikamen, counsel for the defence of part of Fortis' small shareholders, and Rudy Aernoudt, former head of cabinet and short-lived leader of LiDé, Libéral et Démocrate – the People's Party hoped to win over the right-wing electorate in the French-speaking political spectrum. In reference to the models of the Spanish People's Party (PP) and the French Union for Popular Movement (UMP), the Belgian People's Party presented itself as being 'blatantly' right-wing, and focused on two main lines in order to attract two electoral segments: an ultra-Liberal position regarding socioeconomic issues and a very ambivalent position regarding immigration and security issues. Although it did

cdH	Ecolo	MR	PS	Vlaams Belang	Autre
868	1.353	8.983	531	557	3.325



PP

Origins of PP voters.

not achieve the success it had hoped for, the PP nevertheless obtained an elected member in the district of Nivelles thanks to the electoral alliance with the district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde.

Where did the People's Party get its votes? At first glance, it appears that the People's Party was able to count on three bases to achieve its modest result. The first – which was by far the most significant – was made up of Liberal voters who were probably the most right-wing fragment of the MR's Brussels electorate. No less than 8,983 Mouvement réformateur voters chose the People's Party this time. The second was a shift in the electorate of far-right voters from the Vlaams Belang as well as the Front National. The elections were difficult for these two parties. Finally, the third – which is perhaps partially included in the second component – was the expression of a protesting electorate to the benefit of the PP. The reason for a limited shift involving former ecologist voters probably lies here. On the contrary, the arrivals from the cdH electorate are extremely low, and even insignificant in the case of the PS.

2. The Flemish parties

2.1. The Open-VLD

Although it still has the status of main Flemish party in the Brussels-Capital Region, the Open-VLD had a low retention rate of its electorate. The Flemish Liberals were

only able to keep just over one out of two voters from 2009. The main beneficiary of these withdrawals was the winner of the elections on the Flemish side, i.e. the N-VA. The Flemish nationalist party obtained 12.65% of the VLD electorate from 2009 (- 1,512 votes). The Open VLD lost close to



MR	CD&V	SP.a	Open VLD	Groen!	N-VA	Other
11,81	5,44	3,95	54,76	3,38	12,65	8,02
1.412	650	472	6.547	404	1.512	959

Presentation of Open-VLD votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

12% of its 2009 electorate to its sister party, the MR (1,412 votes). The withdrawals to the benefit of other Flemish democratic parties were much more limited: together, the CD&V, the SP.a and Groen! only obtained the support of 12.76% of the Flemish Liberal voters from 2009.

As regards the votes gathered, the Open VLD benefited above all from the 1,200 French-speaking Liberal votes from 2009. The net balance is however slightly unfavourable (- 205 votes). The Liberals also attracted part of the CD&V electorate (- 777

MR	CD&V	SP.a	Groen!	Other
1.207	777	420	187	1.482



Open-VLD

Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the Open VLD in 2009.

votes). Generally speaking, the results with respect to the main parties are almost neutral. The net balance of the drop in votes with respect to the 2009 regional elections is above all explained by the shift which took place to the benefit of the N-VA.

2.2. *The Socialistische Partij, anders*



PS	CD&V	SP.a	Open VLD	Groen!	N-VA	Other
2,27	0,88	66,46	4,16	8,03	2,70	15,50
229	89	6702	420	810	272	1563

Presentation of SP.a votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

SP.a voters from 2009 (- 810 votes) and, to a lesser extent, the Open-VLD, which obtained just over 4% of the Flemish Socialist voters from 2009 (- 420 votes). On the other hand, the SP.a turned out to be a poor source of voters for the N-VA,

Ecolo	PS	CD&V	Open VLD	Groen !	Other
791	208	385	472	541	347



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the SP.a in 2009.

however – from that of the Open VLD, with respect to which the results of withdrawals and arrivals are more or less balanced (+ 52 votes).

2.3. *The N-VA*

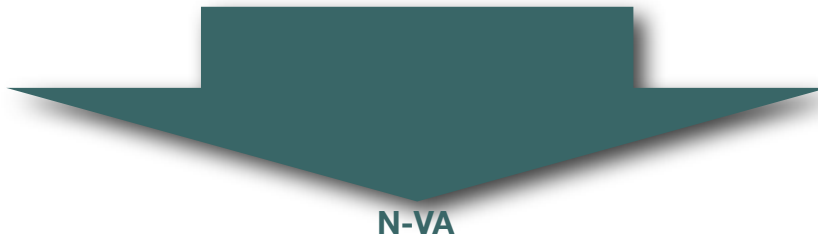
What can be said about the party which fired imaginations on 13 June 2010? In 2009, the N-VA took part in the regional elections alone for the first time. Its score at these elections does not allow an in-depth analysis. According to our information, the N-VA kept almost all of its 2009 electorate. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the success of the Flemish nationalist party in 2010 was due to the important contribution from three right-wing or far-right parties. The Vlaams Belang constitutes the biggest contribution (+ 1,578 votes), followed by the Open VLD (+ 1,512 votes) and the prime minister's party, the CD&V (+ 1,339 votes). In contrast, the shifts originat-

The 2010 electoral results were the lowest for the Flemish Socialists since 1945. In Brussels, the SP.a experienced a slight drop in votes with respect to 2009. At 66.5%, the retention rate was relatively high. The main beneficiary of the withdrawals was Groen!, which obtained 8% of the

which clearly did not owe its success to a gain in Socialist votes. As we have mentioned, the shift to the benefit of the PS is very modest.

In terms of arrivals, the SP.a benefited above all from the contribution of the two green parties, Ecolo (+ 791 votes) and Groen! (+ 541 votes), but also – to a lesser extent

N-VA	CD&V	SP.a	Open-Vld	Vlaams Belang	Other
2.586	1.339	272	1.512	1.578	1.513



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the N-VA in 2009.

ing from left-wing parties, the SP.a and Groen!, are totally insignificant. It would be interesting to verify whether these observations may be confirmed in the Flemish spectrum because, if so, they would indicate that the exceptional progress made by the N-VA took place without the contribution of the libertarian nationalist electorate of the defunct Volksunie.¹³

2.4. The Vlaams Belang

Following the important loss of ground which it experienced during the 2009 regional elections, the Vlaams Belang confirmed its political and electoral decline in the Brussels-Capital Region, where it once dominated the other Flemish parties and appeared capable of paralysing the institutions in the Region.¹⁴

Based on a low score, the Flemish far-right was only able to keep just under two-thirds of its electorate. The withdrawals were almost exclusively to the benefit of right-wing parties. It is not surprising that the biggest shift concerned the N-VA. 17.4% of former Vlaams Belang voters chose the Flemish nationalists this time



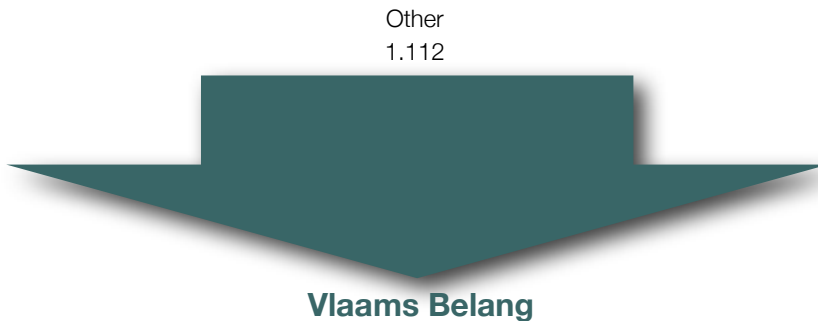
FN	PP	N-VA	Vlaams Belang	Other
6,67	6,14	17,40	65,38	4,41
605	557	1578	5.931	400

Presentation of Vlaams Belang votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

(- 1,578 votes). The Front National, which is also in difficulty, benefited from the arrival of 6.7% of Vlaams Belang voters from 2009 (- 605 votes). Finally, the new People's Party was also the recipient of an electoral segment of the Vlaams Belang from 2009 (- 557 votes).

¹³ Emilie van Haute, Jean-Benoit Pilet, 'Regionalist Parties in Belgium (VU, RW, FDF) : victims of their own success ?', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 2006, vol. 16, n°3, pp. 297-313; Pascal Delwit, Emilie van Haute, 'L'implosion et la fin d'un parti : la Volksunie', *L'Année sociale*, 2002, pp. 13-24.

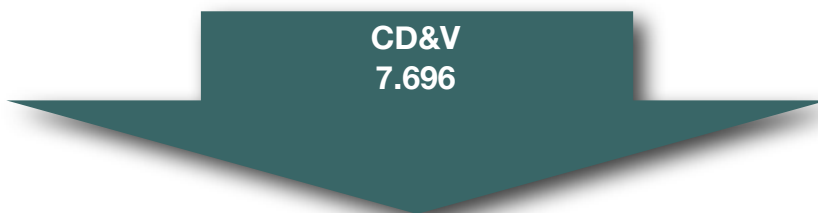
¹⁴ Pascal Delwit, Jean-Michel De Waele, Andrea Rea, 'Les étapes de l'extrême droite en Belgique', in Pascal Delwit, Jean-Michel De Waele, Andrea Rea (eds), *L'extrême droite en France et en Belgique*, Complexe, 1998, pp. 57-83.



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the Vlaams Belang in 2009.

2.5. The CD&V

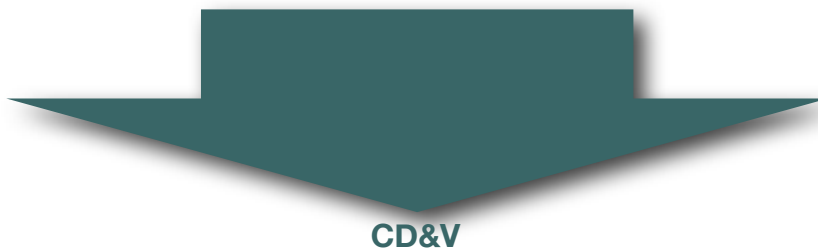
In Flanders, the Flemish Christian Democrats suffered a harsh electoral defeat. On 10 June 2010, the CD&V recorded its lowest electoral results since the establishment of universal suffrage. In the Brussels-Capital Region, however, the CD&V was able to limit the damage. Despite this, its retention rate was exceptionally low. Less than one out of two Flemish Christian Democrat voters from 2009 voted for the CD&V again in 2010. 31% of the CD&V electorate voted for another Flemish democratic party. As expected, the main beneficiary of the shifts was the N-VA, which alone obtained 17.4% of the Christian Democrat electorate from 2009 (- 1,339 votes). The Open-VLD obtained the support of just over 10% of the



cdH	CD&V	SP.a	Open VLD	Groen !	N-VA	Vi. Belang	Other
2,90	45,72	5,00	10,10	4,25	17,40	1,09	13,54
223	3.519	385	777	327	1.339	84	1.042

Presentation of CD&V votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.

cdH	SP.a	Open VLD	Groen !	Lijst Dedecker	Autres
409	89	650	212	1.030	1.317



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than the CD&V in 2009.

These withdrawals were compensated for only very partially. No noteworthy shift in the electorate of a French-speaking or Flemish party to the benefit of the Vlaams Belang was observed.

Despite this, its retention rate was exceptionally low. Less than one out of two Flemish Christian Democrat voters from 2009 voted for the CD&V again in 2010. 31% of the CD&V electorate voted for another Flemish democratic party. As expected, the main beneficiary of the shifts was the N-VA, which alone obtained 17.4% of the Christian Democrat electorate from 2009 (- 1,339 votes). The Open-VLD obtained the support of just over 10% of the

CD&V voters from 2009 (- 777 votes), and the SP.a and Groen! each benefited from the arrival of 5% of the CD&V voters from 2009. As we have pointed out, the withdrawals to the benefit of the French-speaking sister party, the cdH, are insignificant (223 votes).

On the other hand, the CD&V attracted a significant share of the Lijst Dedecker (1,030 votes) and the Open-VLD (650 votes) electorates. The arrivals from the cdH are limited but slightly higher than the 'lost' votes. In terms of net balance, the results are therefore more or less balanced for the CD&V, which explains the near *status quo* of its score. Although it lost a substantial number of votes to the benefit of the N-VA, it 'recovered' a not insignificant share of the Lijst Dedecker electorate.

2.6. Groen!

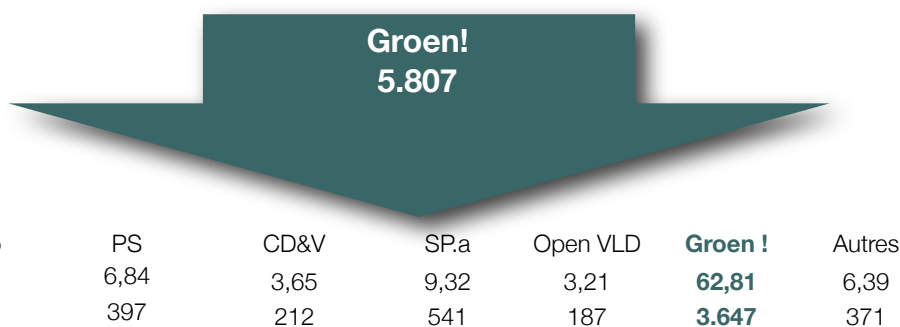
Finally, what can be said about the Flemish green party? Groen! had a rather good retention rate. The Flemish green party was able to keep 63% of its 2009 electorate.

Three political parties above all were the main beneficiaries of the withdrawals: the SP.a, which gathered more than 9% of the Groen! electorate from 2009 (- 541 votes), the sister party Ecolo, which obtained just under 8% of Flemish green party votes from 2009 (-452 votes), and the Parti socialiste, which

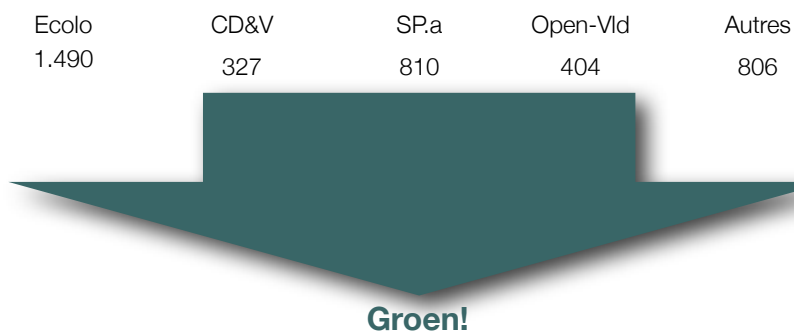
took just under 7% of the Groen! votes (- 397 votes). Similar to what was observed regarding the SP.a, the withdrawals to the benefit of the N-VA are insignificant.

In terms of arrivals, Groen! benefited from the votes of 1,500 Ecolo voters from 2009, which allowed it to be the (great) net beneficiary with regard to Ecolo (+ 1,048 votes) and the SP.a,

with a positive balance as well (+ 269 votes). It therefore appears that in an electoral segment of 3,000 to 4,000 voters in Brussels, there is a fluidity between the votes for Ecolo, Groen!, SP.a and even PS.



Presentation of Groen! votes from 2009 in the 2010 federal elections.



Arrivals of voters who voted for a party other than Groen! in 2009.

3. Summary

The main objective of this article devoted to the shifts in the electorate between the 2009 regional election and the 13 June 2010 federal elections in the Brussels-Capital Region was to go beyond an analysis presenting the gross figures of these elections and the differences for each party with respect to the previous scores. These differences may give the impression that citizens either reproduced their vote from the previous elections, or they left one of the losers from 2009 to join one of the winners. The shifts in the electorate are more complex. The analyses presented allowed this to be verified. All of the parties – even the main winner in Brussels, i.e. the Parti socialiste – lost voters from 2009, and all of them – even the losers – succeeded in winning over new voters.

Significant yet invisible shifts in the electorate at aggregate level were brought to light. Thus, many shifts – from Ecolo to the PS, from the cdH to the MR, as well as from the MR to the cdH – were observed. Even relative electoral stability can reveal significant shifts, as illustrated by the case of the CD&V.

In a first analysis, several coherent shifts were brought to light. The withdrawal of Liberal voters benefited mainly a right-wing party – the People's Party – which, on the other hand, did not win over voters from the Parti socialiste. In the Flemish spectrum, the victory of the N-VA took place to the detriment of other centre-right or far-right parties. In contrast, there was a near watertightness between the SP.a and Groen! electorates on the one hand and, on the other hand, the N-VA.

Finally, this exercise also illustrates an important reality to bear in mind. There is not 'one' electorate per party but rather electoral segments which may vote for the same party for different reasons or abandon it for different reasons. Ecolo is probably the best illustration of this. The French-speaking ecologists lost a significant number of their voters to the benefit of left-wing parties – the Parti socialiste, the PTB+ or the Front des gauches – or right-wing parties – the Mouvement réformateur and the People's Party.

Appendix

cdH: Centre démocrate humaniste (French-speaking Christian Democrats)

CD&V: Christendemocratisch & Vlaams (Flemish Christian Democrats)

Ecolo: Ecologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales (French-speaking ecologists)

FN: Front National (Far Right Party)

Groen!: Green! (Flemish ecologists)

LDD: Lijst Dedecker (Dedecker List)

MR: Mouvement réformateur (French-speaking Liberal Party)

N-VA: Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (New Flemish Alliance)

Open VLD: Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Flemish Liberal Party)

PS: Parti socialiste (French-speaking Socialist Party)

SP.a: Socialistische Partij.anders (Flemish Socialist Party)

Vlaams Belang: The importance of Flanders (Far Right Party)